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[BEGIN AUDIO]

INTERVIEWER: At approximately eleven forty five in the morning, by the national park service at American Memorial Park, in cooperation with Marianos Cable Vision. The subject is CRISTINO DELA CRUZ Dela Cruz, resident of Saipan, prior to and during the Campaign of the Marianas. The interviewer is Daniel Martinez, historian for the national park service at the USS Arizona Memorial. Good morning, Mr. Dela Cruz.

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ DELA CRUZ: Good morning, sir.

INTERVIEWER: I have a few questions to ask you and the first one is could you, for the record, state your full and complete name?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ DELA CRUZ: My name is CRISTINO DELA CRUZ Sablong Dela Cruz.

INTERVIEWER: And could you spell for us your last name?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ DELA CRUZ: My last name is D-e-l-a Cruz.

INTERVIEWER: C-u-r-z.

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ DELA CRUZ: Yeah, that's right.

INTERVIEWER: When were you born?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: I was born on December 15, 1926.

INTERVIEWER: And what were your parents' names?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: My parents name is Jose Zepeda Dela Cruz and my mother's name is Consolacion Tudela Sablong.

INTERVIEWER: And sitting next to you is Mr.?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Mr. Jose Palacias.

INTERVIEWER: And he will act as our interpreter today. Welcome Mr. Palacias.

PALACIAS: Thank you, sir.

INTERVIEWER: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

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CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: I have only one brother beside me.

INTERVIEWER: And his name?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: My brother's name is Gabriel Sablong Dela Cruz.

INTERVIEWER: Are you the older brother or the younger brother?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: I'm the younger brother.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Is he still alive?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: He was killed during the invasion by the Japanese.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, we'll talk a little bit about that later. What town did you grow up here in Saipan?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: I was living in ...

INTERVIEWER: Garapan which was the main town here.

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yeah, that's right.

INTERVIEWER: And did you go to school in Garapan?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yes, I did. I went to elementary school for three years and then after I graduated I become [INDISCERNIBLE] on the higher school for two years, mixed together five years. Then I joined to the Japanese [INDISCERNIBLE] Cooperation Forces by the Japanese.

INTERVIEWER: What was the Cooperation Forces? What was that?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: We are assigned to the Japanese, to any place to help the government to function like corridor road or any road that built, we have to be assigned to work there and anything like airstrip I was assigned also to do the work for one year period.

INTERVIEWER: That was hard work.

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yes, sir.

INTERVIEWER: How old were you when the work was being done?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Fourteen years old.

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INTERVIEWER: And how long was your work day?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Well Monday to Saturday I worked for the year.

INTERVIEWER: How many hours a day?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Sometimes ten hours. From six o'clock in the morning until six in the afternoon, in the evening.

INTERVIEWER: How did the Japanese treat you?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Sometimes before the war, the Japanese treat us very nice but when they were [INDISCERNIBLE] the Japanese becoming very strict, especially to the native, to the [SOUNDS LIKE] Echemoro or to the Carolinian.

INTERVIEWER: What kind of discipline would they inflict on people that they felt did not behave or perform properly?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: We are instructed by the Japanese government not to beat any Japanese children. Once we caught, we fighting against Japanese, we are to be forced to like beating or to give some work and hard work together with discipline.

INTERVIEWER: So you could be beaten yourself or forced to hard labor?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yeah, some time they did something like that.

INTERVIEWER: What was Saipan like before the war came?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Oh, Saipan is like during, I mean before the war come to Saipan, like we are living in paradise. Very good living.

INTERVIEWER: What kind of things were here that are not here anymore, in the way of agriculture and things?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Oh, before the war we have, we thought to do the agricultural work and then by the time we do it, you know, the Japanese is strict on the Echemoro or Carolinian people, the same way and to give us some good treatment but only thing that when the wars come we are becoming to face a very horrible ...

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INTERVIEWER: The main crops here were sugar?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Sugar and tapioca.

INTERVIEWER: Ah.

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: We are harvest the tapioca and put it into the refinery station and we drive and send to Japan and also the sugar.

INTERVIEWER: Sugar is hard work.

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yeah, that's right.

INTERVIEWER: And I went up to the park and I saw the statue of what they call the Sugar King. Did you meet him, did you know him?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: During my school time, we the one who build that statue.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: The statue that I imported from Japan. Made of bones.

INTERVIEWER: Very heavy.

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yeah very heavy and we are told to do the work and sometime we gave the Japanese labor for who to build this.

INTERVIEWER: I see the statue was up before the war started.

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yeah, about fifteen years before the war was come to Saipan. That statue was built in same subject.

INTERVIEWER: I see. I noticed there's a train there. Do you remember the steam train?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yes, altogether the train that been the freight during the sugar cane harvest time is more than seven train.

INTERVIEWER: I see.

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: And some train that pay used to noting the fort for the city

...

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INTERVIEWER: I see, I see. How did you find out that Japan was now at war with the United States? How did the Chumato people and the Carolinian people, how was that announced?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: How did they know that the Japanese start the war against the, I mean against America because we have been called by the Japanese school teacher to re-assemble during my time. I was only a fifth grade during that time and we make it attention to help the order from the Japanese [INDISCERNIBLE] who have never seen this document, that it came from Japan Imperial. This and this why the Japanese to be war against America and Europe beginning because we been surprised by the Japanese to be hurt or some order by the Japanese imperial that the Japanese starting to work, you know.

INTERVIEWER: What changes occurred after the war started here? Although the war doesn't come here two years later, were there changes already happening? You said that they treated you differently. What kind of changes were happening inside Saipan?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: On the weekend we would see the Japanese reaction, the movement and some order delivered to the Chamoro people, Carolina, not to look around where the Japanese, why crew member thought you know, you don't begin to move from the sea side because they start to transfer or start to moving these like big cannon.

INTERVIEWER...: Oh, okay. So they started to build their defenses?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: And move guns and you were told not to look at that or watch that. Was there any resistance? I mean you were basically Japanese citizens because of the mandate. You spoke Japanese yourself? Did the Chamoro people have to speak Japanese or learn Japanese?

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CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yes, especially my class during that time. I forced myself to understand more Japanese. Not only to be understood by speaking, I learned how to write forty seven letter like [SOUNDS LIKE] kata kara, zagana, gangi and dequisi. I got to learn to my secret so I can hide, I got to hide something what I know.

INTERVIEWER: So you can read.

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: When they ask me would I understand Japanese sometime, I refuse to say yes because I got to hide some secret because when the Japanese know that anything, like what I said, this whole language, that I can write, I become in trouble by the Japanese.

INTERVIEWER: Suspect.

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yeah to [INDISCERNIBLE], you know.

INTERVIEWER: Did you see any executions or bad treatment of your people?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: No.

INTERVIEWER : What about your brother?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yes, I can say that yes but that is during the war here. During the fighting. When the Japanese, when the America Marine start to invade Saipan, three days later, by brother killed by Japanese.

INTERVIEWER: Why was he killed?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: You know it is something that I can't say is accident or not accident but I can say that you know, while we are coming now one day the American Marine calling us to coming up from the fox hole. We are coming out, showing them to the Marine; then, by a sudden, my brother fell down and then I look around and she's a little painful, you know? So I look but something I cannot say anything in that moment. So we coming out from the foxhole, surrender to the American Marine and then they told us to get up to the [INDISCERNIBLE] carrier. When we get up, my brother who was after me, he could not get up so the Marines help him, carry to

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unload it and the driver said let's go so she head off the personal carrier to the safety zone. While we are going to the safety zone and then we reach, we are told to calm down and we calm down. We got my brother in my hand and my mother and we unloaded. And then my brother cannot move and the coma and he put the thermometer inside the mouth ...

INTERVIEWER: Thermometer?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yeah and my brother, still unconscious and the thermometer that he has in the mouth crush by mouth, crush by my brother.

INTERVIEWER: Right, he crushed it with his teeth.

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yeah and then they come and shake his head and as, you know, I cannot speak in the English that time, but I said you know ...

INTERVIEWER: Can you repeat what words you said in Chamaro? Can you say those words?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: The Chamaro? Okay. I got to say [INDISCERNIBLE] Then they come and shake the hand, head and I realized that maybe it's no good. My brother's about to pass away so she, he told us to come out to the personal carrier again and by the time we come to the personal carrier, everybody loaded then he proceed down to [INDISCERNIBLE] Canal and he turned to the south where the fourth Marine Division cemetery and when we reach there, we are told to calm down. When we calm down, we look around and the chaplain who was giving service to the dead person, calling us and he told us in English are you people, this is your brother, you know? What I cannot understand during that time any English so the chaplain spoke in German, I mean in Spanish. Then my mother who understand Spanish said he's calling us, whoever understand the language is coming so my mother and he asked me to come to give a service, you know so I look around and then the chaplain came

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over and the one Marine who understands some Japanese, he talked to two POW to come in to help us for the burial.

INTERVIEWER: For the burial?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Did you see your brother shot? Was he shot?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: I never see anything at that moment but when my brother was, my brother's body moved to the side I can see some bullet hole from the back.

INTERVIEWER: He was shot in the back?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: So he wasn't shot by the Marines?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: No, no.

INTERVIEWER: He was shot by some of the Japanese?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Those Japanese snipers who hiding behind us before we coming. They are the one who shot my brother.

INTERVIEWER: Because they didn't want you to surrender.

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yeah, that's right

INTERVIEWER: And then they buried your brother at the cemetery?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yes and before the funeral, I look, I mean I look around. Then the Japanese POW came down, the POW, and he keep it over the stretcher which I have my brother on the stretcher so he tip it over and he dump it in the pit and my brother's body fell down to the ground, I mean to the what do we call that?

INTERVIEWER: Burial pit?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yes and then maybe my brother's neck almost broken. So I told myself you Japanese no good, especially you POW and now we thought American, I've got to do something so after the funeral I look around where I can see burning stake like this maybe and I mean to kill these Japanese POW and I bit him

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and not only one time enough so I look around again and I told the Japanese, even you Japanese Imperial Hirohito, he's [INDISCERNIBLE] I'm going to do something so I bit him again and ...

INTERVIEWER: Were you talking to them in Japanese?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yes, yes, I talking to them ...

INTERVIEWER: Can you say those words in Japanese that you were saying to them?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: I was talking to the Japanese, the Japanese ...

INTERVIEWER: Can you repeat those words for me in Japanese?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Okay the first, what I told them, you [INDISCERNIBLE] you dumping my brother, I got to kill you.

INTERVIEWER: Can you say it in Japanese?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: So I tell them in Japanese, you Japanese, you dumping my brother like an animal, I'm not the enemy, I've got to kill you so I got this stick and I bit him, bit first, then I look around again and I tell them in Japanese, now you Japanese I got to kill you even Japanese Imperial, I've got to kill you and I bit them again.

INTERVIEWER: Could you tell him to say those words in Japanese so we have them?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: I told them in Japanese, oh, [SOUNDS LIKE] Nanu Konaniste, [INDISCERNIBLE] Caballero, Conocer ... Then I tell them in Japanese again and I tell them in Japanese, I tell them in Japanese again, I tell them [SOUNDS LIKE] Neono, Tedo, Economo, Coronish Se, [INDISCERNIBLE]. This is the language I spoke to them.

INTERVIEWER: Fifty years after this, you still feel this in your heart.

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: But fifty years maybe nothing in my heart because anybody is peace now so why I can, why elaborate why I told them? For fifty years, this is what [INDISCERNIBLE].

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INTERVIEWER: You had vowed them to join the American forces to avenge your brother's death. How did you do that? Who did you see that would allow you to be scout?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: When I was put into the start gate or in training camp, I was so sad, maybe like eleven what I try to do but when I sat down, from five o'clock in the afternoon during that particular day, I sat down, face down, very sad and I tried to remember why I did to the Japanese. The first thing, what they did to my brother is already done so why I did, why did the Japanese did it. This is why I tried to realize so I sat down. Very emotional and the hour passed, two hours, three hours. The drop came up, nine o'clock at night time. From five o'clock in the afternoon until nine o'clock. My tear calm down. Not just because my brother, they all come and we are victimized by the Japanese. We [INDISCERNIBLE] but I can't forget anything. Until nine thirty I look around. Nothing I can see because all dark. Only the fighting forces who landed is that you can see any light. I face down, then suddenly somebody touching my shoulder. I look around. I can see only a shadow of a man and I look. There's a light. She got a ladder, tried to lighting and they tried to look for the man who, who was looking but I don't know whether they looking at me. Then suddenly a man said you come so I can see only some light, you know? Then I step out from the gate. There, that thing, Marine, who was followed one by one and I was going with them, by their command. I had never know what kind of language, but I follow. As why they waving me like this so I follow until I reach a tent. A service Marine to the cemetery and some higher ranking official but I don't know the name. I don't know also the rank but which one is higher and which one is low so I look after and then we came in to the tent where somebody went into the gate by the higher people inside and I was told to wait. I don't know the language what I have to wait but after they waved me, they, the guy that did an interrogate his move to the other

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side. When I coming, they asked me to sit down where the [INDISCERNIBLE] look on the bottom so I sit down. And the, maybe that commanding Marshall maybe, colonel or somebody, he told me are you, do you want to go with the Japanese? But I cannot answer in that moment, I cannot understand any word, English word so they ask one Mexican Marine to come to me and he asked me in ...

INTERVIEWER: Spanish?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Spanish, he asked me I speak Spanish? Si. Then ...

INTERVIEWER: Se habla espanol?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yeah, me habla espanol then he asked me how old I am in Spanish. Cuantos anos tienes? Said si, diez y siete anos y seis meses, joven. Yo mama donde viene y seis [INDISCERNIBLE] I said [SOUNDS LIKE] te.

INTERVIEWER: How was mother very, very sad as well? How did she take your brother's death?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Oh, yeah, yeah. Same thing as what I felt. So the Mexican people go with the English and I go with the Spanish and then he, these Mexican people tell me, hey habla espanol? Si. Mi habla, si. Mi habla, tu? Si.

INTERVIEWER: So he was telling you were brothers?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: No, we are telling that I can speak also some Japanese language.

INTERVIEWER: Some Spanish?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: And German.

INTERVIEWER: And German? Oh.

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: You know, we can go with us Japanese, we can go with English ...

INTERVIEWER: Because the Germans were here, the Spaniards were here and the Japanese were here.

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CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: So I could communicate in both ways in very, very, figure what language then the colonel who was interrogate me, he become happy and he shake hand with me. You know, then I be happy, too. I been happy so you know ...

INTERVIEWER: And you were seventeen years old?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Huh?

INTERVIEWER: You were seventeen?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Seventeen and a half. And I was also questioned by your big Japanese soldier because you don't like, I said yes maybe I don't like because why he dump my brother, it's not good to so I tell hm you know, I communicate in that way. Then he ask me you familiar with some Japanese where they hiding? I said yes, I'll show you where the hiding place. I took them a map that I hiding into my back torso pocket and I showed it. This is the map. I can show you where we are hiding, Japanese [INDISCERNIBLE] everything and some cooperation. I can show you where the Japanese company they're hiding and to which way they fighting against America and then ...

INTERVIEWER: That must have made the officer very happy.

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yeah. He become so happy and he told me you the one I was looking. Please, can you show these fighter men where the Japanese hiding place and also this mission and I told them okay, if you take me to this place I show you. Then he told me I am going to let you go over to your mother and get your mother blessing so if you want to go with our people, you want to go? I said yes, okay. So he told these American Mexican people to go with me to the internment camp where my mother is so I get my mother's blessing.

INTERVIEWER: Wasn't your mother afraid that you may die, too?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: She told me, oh my dear son, you already served and you're going to die maybe because you go with the fighting me so if you still want to

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go, I will give you my bless so she hugged me and crying for five minutes and her tear come to my chest and wet me all over. Then he told me please be God with you, then I told my mother if I not die, the fortune that come to us and also to the American soldiers. But if I die, maybe give us [INDISCERNIBLE] I always listen, if not listen, peace so I apart with my mother's blessing. When I come over, there's [INDISCERNIBLE] the uniform that we have inside the duffel bag ...

INTERVIEWER: So the Marines gave him a uniform?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: No, then I was given a helmet, shoes and a helmet and fatigue uniform. They painted my front of my chest with a red on back.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, they painted it with red so that you ...

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: To identify as a guide.

INTERVIEWER: As a guide. So you became a Marine.

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Provisional Marine.

INTERVIEWER: Now was there any other Saipanese or Chamaro people or Carolinian people that became like you?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: I do not even know but later.

INTERVIEWER: Later?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: And there were two more?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Two more, yes. But the only marine which I went to is Fourth Marine Division on the east side of the island.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, what towns would that be? Would that be up at where? Garipan?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: No, [SOUNDS LIKE] Fineszio, on the, like, the north, going up and going to almost the road leading to the airport, airstrip.

PALACIAS: More in the southeast area.

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INTERVIEWER: Southeast area. Because you had worked out there.

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: So you knew what was out there.

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yeah so I was so, during that night, if a tank came over, we were going to [INDISCERNIBLE] so you got to wear [INDISCERNIBLE]. You know before I wear the American Marine uniform, I was with the Japanese fatigue uniform and they gave, they tear off everything, even my panty. I have nothing so they give me all this ...

INTERVIEWER: You had no clothes?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: No, but I get all my uniform from that moment so even legging, even the shoes, [INDISCERNIBLE] my size. Then ...

INTERVIEWER: How did you feel?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Very good. I like it very much and not only that, I become Marine. You know, I'm very, very proud to show the people that I'm with fighting men so I start from the road which I head over there and then I ride with the tank to where they have to and the radio communicate with them that we are here and they plan on the signal to which way I have to go and almost go like this, zig zag, zig zag to make sure that the Japanese cannot destroy my tank but on the two days later, I come near to the Death Valley ...

INTERVIEWER: The famous Death Valley area.

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: And that time Japanese [SOUNDS LIKE] projectile penetrate, blow up donde left track of the tank then side, what we call side down. Then I go out from the turret ...

INTERVIEWER: Oh, you were in the tank.

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Oh yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Oh. Did it shake you?

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CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yeah, but ...

INTERVIEWER: Were you scared?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yes, because I was told not to carry any firearm. I am scared because I got to only go my body, not to go with ...

PALACIAS: Any weapons.

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Any weapon.

INTERVIEWER: So you crawled out of the tank. Was it burning?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: No, lucky because you know, this is something that we have, lucky that we went up. Two minutes later the explosion from the side, everything ...

INTERVIEWER: Blew up.

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Hm.

INTERVIEWER: How did you get out of the tank? Did you go out the bottom or out the top?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: The top is like the, no, the turret but side down. I got to go from the side.

INTERVIEWER: With the other Americans, right?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Near thing

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yeah. And then I was told that I have to be not with the tank this time. I have to with half truck.

INTERVIEWER: Half track.

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yeah and during that time, very dangerous from the top or maybe you can be hit so anytime ...

INTERVIEWER: Hm hm, open, it's open. Hand grenade can come in.

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CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Uh huh, yeah, that's right. And then I was told by MP to hold the handle so we hold it and then we came out from the truck and we sat down and wait our [INDISCERNIBLE] during that time but only switch out of them one by one to ...

PALACIAS: Fifty fifty.

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yeah.

PALACIAS: During the military.

INTERVIEWER: Really?

PALACIAS: Half eat and the other half security or something.

INTERVIEWER: So half eats and half protects.

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yeah, that's right. So what I did, I sat down near where the GMC or maybe not GMC, big diamond truck ...

PALACIAS: [SOUNDS LIKE] Fever?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yeah. I sat down under the floor, between the, this is the, from the ...

PALACIAS: Axle and the rear axle.

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: I had between the two wheel and then I was faced very, when I could see that anybody not, I could not see anybody because of the facing when to go, they are protecting themselves so I hide between the two wheel and I eating my [INDISCERNIBLE] and the Japanese [INDISCERNIBLE]

INTERVIEWER: Counterattack.

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Oh yeah, more than five hundred Japanese already in our side, six feet from where I hiding so I pretend that I'm die already so the Japanese coming but what I can see many American Marines fighting with the unit and ...

INTERVIEWER: Hand to hand fighting.

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CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yeah and the Japanese who tried to kill the American Marine which [INDISCERNIBLE] and the American throws the bayonet too and the Japanese rifle fell down, and fell down to right here.

INTERVIEWER: Is that a scar from the bayonet?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yeah, hm hm. This is something like two inches and a half long and this is from the Japanese fragmentation grenade.

INTERVIEWER: Fragmentation grenade?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Hm hm.

INTERVIEWER: And your hand?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yeah. Oh no. This is ...

INTERVIEWER: Other injury?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yeah, from the accident.

INTERVIEWER: Accident. But you were feigning death. You were pretending to be dead when all of this happened?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: So what happened next?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Next, right after that, two second, I mean five second there's Japanese counterattack again coming but lucky there's some back-up from the Marine side ...

INTERVIEWER: Reserve.

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: They kill it and kill each other. Some time I can see one Marine bayoneted one Japanese.

INTERVIEWER: They bayoneted each other the same time?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yeah but lucky, the American [INDISCERNIBLE] but what I can see, one American Marine bayoneted one Japanese and the five Japanese at one time bayoneted to one American Marine. In [INDISCERNIBLE] came off everything. I

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can see more than five hundred Japanese at one time die and the American more than a hundred fifty, hand to hand combat.

INTERVIEWER: You had never seen anything like that before?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: No, I never see.

INTERVIEWER: It must have been horrible.

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yeah, but right after this incident, right after my wound, everything start to calm down in that area. That they got through this, to finish in that Death Valley, then I was transferred to a few hospital where I was treated and then after, during the war I was treating. The colonel commander, company commander, I believe.

INTERVIEWER: Company commander.

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: He come over to inspect me, then he saw me and he said you wounded? Lucky that Mexican Marine was with my company and he told me, he said you wounded? I said yes. So he told me, so now we are going to grant you permission to get any weapons you want to get and to use as you can so my [INDISCERNIBLE] decided that I got to get the bazooka to blast them up, the Japanese so I decided when I, so when I see my Mexican buddy, he said what you going to do with this? I said I'm going to use it. He said you cannot. You've got to have a 728 person on your team. You cannot use the Bazooka. Somebody have to transfer the [INDISCERNIBLE], somebody have to yeah ...

INTERVIEWER: Load them.

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: You wanted the biggest weapon you could carry.

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: So I asked him what's better? He said hold this gun, [INDISCERNIBLE] this like a Tommy gun? Carbon M2, Carbon M1, M1 rifle or anything. If those thing that you want, go ahead and take so I tried to bring in the

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Tommy gun or maybe good one so I carry gun, I get the carbon also and I load it with clip together, very good so ...

INTERVIEWER: So you had a Tommy gun and a carbon?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Carbon M2.

INTERVIEWER: So you had two weapons?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yeah but sometime in the shooting place good because you've got to wait but to go forward you cannot go with two of them, too heavy. So I got to decided maybe not the carbon, I've got to get Tommy gun.

INTERVIEWER: Cristino, did you ever fire a weapon before this? Had you fired Japanese weapons or did you know how to shoot?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yeah, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Were you a good shot?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Nothing to be good shot. Suppose how you carry Tommy gun, if you go about ten feet away nearby the Japanese, you go [SOUNDS LIKE SHOT] like this, Japanese no more. Very good. These kinds of weapons very accurate.

INTERVIEWER: It's humorous now but it wasn't humorous then.

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: But you know, while I with American Marine in the fighting, not to shoot anybody but I used to shoot when we have any occasion to shoot. Nothing to waste because in other word, no time to see enemy that's coming and if the enemy coming and you are about to be shot, I'm going to shoot nothing to shoot anymore. And you've got to be kill it so ...

INTERVIEWER: It's very difficult in the jungle to fight but you knew this jungle. You knew the ground and terrain. Were you able to tell the Marines where these Japanese may be hiding? Did you take them to those places, too?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yeah. Especially when I'm going to with Marine, I never know where the, somebody near you already hiding and the only [INDISCERNIBLE]

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that they need to be kill it when you have hibernation but when you have nothing of hibernation to shoot anybody, especially the Tommy gun. The Tommy gun is very accurate for only five feet on the distance but you have to have enough [INDISCERNIBLE] nothing to waste.

INTERVIEWER: When you went out on your patrols with the Marines, did you start to find Chamaro people and Carolinian people and call them out too?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yes, that's the most practice that I have to.

INTERVIEWER: Did you find many?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Not in my place, not in the east side.

INTERVIEWER: More on this side were found?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Um, yeah. Especially when you encounter Chamaro, Carolinian people, they are not away from the ranch house farming. They must be hiding inside where they [INDISCERNIBLE] you know. Not too far away to walk, not like Japanese.

INTERVIEWER: How long with you? Did you fight the whole campaign?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yeah, about one month, seventeen days.

INTERVIEWER: And then did you go with the other scouts that were recruited after the campaign to find more Japanese?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yeah, I went.

INTERVIEWER: When did it all end for you? How did it end working with the Marines?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Okay we heard from the announcement from our walkie-talkie that the war in Saipan has been declared secure but not really, not really and when I was welcome, I mean they thanked me for the service I did because the American Marine going to move to [INDISCERNIBLE] and to Guam and Iwo Jima.

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That's [INDISCERNIBLE]. I asked him please forget anything what I give you service but I have to be with my mother. My mother is very old now so I've got to ...

INTERVIEWER: Take care of her?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: And they let you go?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Were you ever recognized by the United States or given any medal or anything ever done for the scouts that helped that day?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: No, no, only in this particular month when they having ceremony at the [SOUNDS LIKE] Susupe.

INTERVIEWER: At the memorial park?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: How do you feel about that now?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: I feel so happy. I feel so proud to receive this kind of medal because during my time to serve the American Marine, nothing to give but they are still busy ...

INTERVIEWER: I'm sorry?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: They are at times still [INDISCERNIBLE] they are still not yet settle, busy in attending [INDISCERNIBLE] Japanese.

INTERVIEWER: I saw you in the parade and you had a very big smile. And all of your people were cheering you.

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Thank you.

PALACIAS: Mr. Dela Cruz did receive a certificate from the United States Marine Corp., excuse me, honoring his service during the time, I think that was in 1982 when you received that?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yeah, yeah.

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PALACIAS: A certificate. That was the only thing he ever got. Just like, you know, thanking his service, you know for his assistance during the invasion of Saipan but that was the only thing that he and the other two late scouts that died already and that's Mr. D'Onorio and the other, Mr. [SOUNDS LIKE] Disecan who were among the three that actually received the certificate.

INTERVIEWER: The certificate.

PALACIAS: The certificate, yes from the Marine Corps. out of Washington, D.C.

INTERVIEWER: Has there been anybody who has talked to them before? Has this history been recorded? Is it ...

PALACIAS: As a matter of fact it's not. We came up with the idea two years ago when one of the, a scout out of Guam mentioned that you know, we should look into this for our folks, like Mr. Dela Cruz here and among the other, a total of a hundred of them that either then and after the war that were recruited to assist them. No documents or records has been actually you know, no you know, in black and white that is. I went through the North American archives and now we're working with the Washington Rep, you know, out of Washington, a representative, trying to see if there's any records out of the Second or Fourth Marine or the Twenty Seventh ...

INTERVIEWER: Written reports.

PALACIAS: Right, out of there, you know, because I know there's a much bigger archives office over there in Washington so now we, just in the past couple of months, we've been again working with these people and involving our North [INDISCERNIBLE] archives to ensure that you know, this event has been documented so we want to make sure that it should be extended and hopefully, the future generation will you know, one day they can always go back and review and you know ...

INTERVIEWER: What their ancestors had done.

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PALACIAS: Right, exactly.

INTERVIEWER: Now did you talk to Lieutenant [SOUNDS LIKE] Sheeks at all? He was a Lieutenant then, he's Major Sheeks now? He mentioned that he had one of the guides with him. He was, have you had an opportunity to talk with him?

PALACIAS: No, sir. No.

INTERVIEWER: Well, we'll get you that name and address and so ...

PALACIAS: I appreciate that.

INTERVIEWER: Why is this commemoration so important to you? These days that we have all the ...

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Because if I don't come and, to this celebration, people cannot see exactly what I, what kind of service and what the other people to be knowing exactly what we did. This is why I'm happy to be in this commemoration.

INTERVIEWER: These memories are very painful.

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: And yet you met the Marines, some of the Marines. Did he meet anybody that knew him during that time? Did any of the Marines that came back know him or see him?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Why, I don't meet them. I asked somebody where the somebody from the Fourth Marine Division is in the visiting ...

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, some of them are at the PIC.

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: I asked them but my division which I work on, not only Saipan, also they fight in [SOUNDS LIKE] Tenya and so maybe not in Guam but Iwo Jima and Okinawa. And that's why my same buddy who was fighting with me during these campaigns, maybe no more, they die.

INTERVIEWER: The Mexican man that you knew, do you remember his last name?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: His name is Tomas Nodding.

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PALACIAS: Nodding.

INTERVIEWER: Nodding.

PALACIAS: Nodding?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: K-n-o ...

INTERVIEWER: K-n-o-t-t-i-n-g?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Knotting. But that isn't a Hispanic name.

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: But he was Hispanic?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: He spoke Spanish?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Hm.

PALACIAS: Must be a translator or something.

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: I couldn't regarding his name but nobody knows.

INTERVIEWER: Have you talked to the Marine Corp. history people at all?

PALACIAS: I spoke with a couple of them.

INTERVIEWER: They're very good. Have they been helpful to you?

PALACIAS: Yes, yes, very.

INTERVIEWER: Well, Mr. Dela Cruz, I want to thank you for this interview. Is there anything that we have not covered that you would like to talk about? Some story that I haven't got from you that you'd like to tell? Is there something I missed?

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: I tried, I won it.

INTERVIEWER: Can you translate that for him?

PALACIAS: Everything's okay.

INTERVIEWER: Well, I'd like to thank you on behalf of the National Park Service for your interview and I want to thank Mr. Palacias for being our translator. I hope that

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when this shows on TV that a number of island people see this because your story is very special.

CRISTINO DELA CRUZ: Thank you.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you.

[END AUDIO]